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DEPT FOR NEA/MAG, ISN/ECC YVETTE WONG AND BILL KUHN  
DHS FOR CBP JOYCE GOUGE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2016

TAGS: ECON ETTC KSTC PARM PREL MO

SUBJECT: EXBS: MOROCCO SEEKS JAN 2008 CONSULTATIONS

REF: STATE 132724

Classified By: Econ Counselor Stuart Smith. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request; please see para 5.

¶2. (SBU) During a December 20 meeting to discuss the EXBS proposal to hold an international transshipment conference in Morocco next year, as well as the postponement of a Charleston-based seaport interdiction course from December to February, Khalid Zerouali, the Ministry of Interior's Director of Migration and Border Protection, countered with a request for help in arranging an executive level Moroccan visit to the U.S. to discuss port and transshipment issues in general. The issue of Moroccan participation in the postponed course could be addressed after such a visit, he said. Zerouali spoke supportively of the planned conference, even suggesting that Morocco could underwrite part of it, but added that he would have to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before the Moroccan government could respond officially.

¶3. (SBU) Zerouali said he had been in contact with the Moroccan Embassy in order to coordinate a Moroccan executive level visit to the U.S. between January 10-11, 2008. He said the purpose of the trip would be to see first-hand how the U.S. organizes and manages all the security processes associated with a major transshipment hub. He said he would personally lead the delegation, which would most likely include 6-7 other officials. He asked post's help in coordinating the visit, but stressed that the Moroccan government would fully fund the travel. Zerouali mentioned the delegation would like to visit the Port of Baltimore and have senior-level meetings with U.S. officials that would help to shed light on Morocco's efforts to blend security and commercial interests at its new transshipment hub in Tangiers. Specific training such as the postponed Charleston course is welcome, Zerouali said, but he emphasized that the more critical issue is helping Morocco with the "big picture" of organizing the security structure of the Tanger-Med port.

¶4. (C) In passing, Zerouali expressed his displeasure with the postponement of the International Seaport Interdiction Training course, originally scheduled to occur in Charleston, SC, from December 6-14, to February 27-arch 7. Both Econ Counselor and Econoff expressd regret for the need to put off the course, but tresssed that the decision stemmed from the fact hat the Department of Homeland Security must recive a list of participants a month before any such prgram in order make the necessary logistical ad other arrangements. Zerouali was noncommittal bout providing a list of participants in time fo the February 27 course start date.

¶5. (SBU) Action request: Post requests NEA/MAG and ISN/ECC help in coordinating with the Moroccan Embassy to facilitate Zerouali's visit. Post suggests one day of meetings with appropriate representation from ISN/ECC and DHS (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Coast Guard, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement) followed by a second day visit to the Port of Baltimore, or another convenient port with significant transshipment operations. End Action Request.

¶6. (C) Comment: Zerouali speaks excellent English and is very interested in seeing how the U.S. blends and balances the myriad of security, customs, and commerce controls associated with a major transshipment hub. He is looking for a "tailored" program that will aid him in establishing similar procedures for Tangier. He is well respected and influential with the MOI, and his visit is paramount to furthering EXBS goals for Morocco.

¶7. (C) Comment Continued: Our experience with the December seaport course, however, makes clear that Zerouali's staff is not uniformly strong and often does not disseminate communications effectively. We will thus need to press early and often, and at a number of levels, to try to secure the timely responses that will facilitate organization of future programs. End Comment.

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